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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twelfth session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 288th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 20 May 1996, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. BELEMBAOGO

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRPERSON declared the twelfth session of the Committee open.

STATEMENT BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

2. Mr. AYALA LASSO (High Commissioner for Human Rights) said he attached high priority to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child and to the vital role of the Committee in that work. He welcomed the encouraging outcome of the pledging conference for the execution of the action plan to reinforce the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

3. The United Nations was undergoing a serious financial and budgetary crisis whose impact on the activities of the secretariat was not yet absolutely clear, but which had already led to a freeze on recruitment, some post cuts and other restrictions, especially in the area of documentation. Nevertheless, those difficulties had not hindered efforts to ensure the follow-up of the Committee's recommendations, as shown by the mission to Viet Nam in March, as part of the advisory services of the Centre for Human Rights. At the suggestion of the Committee, the role of that mission, in which the Rapporteur of the Committee had participated, had been to map out the assistance needed by the Vietnamese Government in the area of the administration of juvenile justice. Another mission, to the Philippines, was currently being prepared, in accordance with the Committee's recommendations.

4. At its fifty-second session, the Commission on Human Rights had held a detailed discussion on the question of the rights of the child and had adopted a resolution on the matter. In particular, welcoming the constructive role played by the Committee, it had asked States parties to cooperate closely with the Committee, and emphasized the importance of providing training on the rights of the child to the relevant professionals. The Commission had invited the Committee to give its views on the draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, and to be represented at future sessions of the working group responsible for the draft; it had also invited the Committee to cooperate in the study by Mrs. Graça Machel on the impact of armed conflicts on children. In addition, the Commission had requested the Secretary-General to transmit to the Committee, for comments, the report of the working group on the draft optional protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and had requested the working group to carry on with its work in close cooperation with the Committee. Finally, it had noted the recommendations of the Committee on the question of child labour, it had recommended that the Committee should continue to tackle the problem of the exploitation of child labour and the problem of street children, and it had also expressed concern about the situation of girls, refugee children and displaced children.

5. At the same session, the Commission had adopted other resolutions of interest to the Committee, notably those on the traffic in women and girls and on human rights in the administration of justice, in particular of children and juveniles in detention. Lastly, in its resolution on the effective

implementation of international human rights instruments, the Commission had taken note of the conclusions and recommendations of the 6th meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies, and had noted the possible benefits for the Committee of setting up a database system, which was due to become operational shortly.

6. He also mentioned that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had held, respectively, their forty-eighth, fifty-sixth, sixteenth and fourteenth sessions since the previous session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. A number of the reports considered at the various sessions of those bodies dealt with countries in which the Committee would also be taking an interest, either at the current session or in the near future, namely Zimbabwe, Guatemala, Mauritius, Nigeria, China and Paraguay. The consideration of the report of Nigeria by the Human Rights Committee had taken place within the framework of the early warning procedure developed by that Committee. A similar procedure had been used by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, notably in its adoption of decisions and declarations on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda and on the terrorist attacks in Israel. As for the Committee against Torture, an increasing proportion of its work had been devoted to the study of individual communications and it had intensified its action with respect to article 20 of the Convention against Torture concerning the inquiry procedure. As for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, it had held a general debate on the draft optional protocol relating to the relevant Covenant.

7. In conclusion, he assured the Committee of his full support for its work.

8. Mr. HAMMARBERG reminded the Committee that it was very much behind schedule in its consideration of reports; there was currently a gap of just over a year between the submission of a report and its consideration. Yet unless the Committee reacted quickly to the steps taken and proposals made by States parties, valuable momentum would be lost. He also requested details on the current financial situation and the total amount of already pledged or expected contributions to put into effect the plan of action for the implementation of the Convention.

9. Mr. AYALA LASSO (High Commissioner for Human Rights) said he would supply the members of the Committee with an up-to-date report as soon as possible on the pledges for the implementation of the plan of action. On the question of the budgetary problems faced by the United Nations, the Centre for Human Rights was currently being restructured. He was determined that that restructuring should allow the Centre, after the necessary period of adaptation, to meet the needs of the various treaty bodies by providing them with a more effective mechanism for their work.

10. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the High Commissioner for Human Rights for his efforts to secure cooperation between the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the technical assistance branch by involving experts from the Committee in technical programme identification activities, thereby ensuring that recommendations were acted upon. She also thanked the Centre for Human Rights, which was financing the participation of one of the members of the

Committee, Mrs. Sardenberg, in the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), as well as her participation in a working group organized by the Centre in January 1996.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 1 of the provisional agenda)

11. The provisional agenda (CRC/C/52) was adopted.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS (agenda item 2)

12. Mrs. RAADI-AZARAKHCHI (Secretary of the Committee) announced that, si its previous session, the Committee had received the reports of the Democra People's Republic of Korea, Trinidad and Tobago, Togo, the United Kingdom o Great Britain and Northern Ireland (on Hong Kong), the Czech Republic, the Maldives, Ireland, Sierra Leone and the Federated States of Micronesia, bringing the total number of reports received to 85 (83 if account was take of the fact that two of those reports were to be reconsidered). Of that total, 50 reports had already been considered, two of them (Paraguay and Rwanda) only partially.

13. The CHAIRPERSON invited Committee members to hold private consultatio immediately after the meeting rose.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.